**Mafia Mask 78**

Chapter 78 Designer Surprise

Ivy's POV

Zoe, Ruby, and I made our way through the marble corridors of the exclusive shopping complex, where only those with the right connections could access the private boutiques on the top floor. Gemma had called earlier, her voice electric with excitement about some stunning new pieces that had just arrived at the boutique, the high-end store that catered exclusively to the wives and daughters of the most powerful families in the city.

The plan was straightforward: select something breathtaking for the upcoming charity gala where several mafia families would be making appearances, and grab dinner at the rooftop restaurant afterward. In our world, every public event was both a social gathering and a carefully orchestrated display of power.

"Ladies! Thank God you made it!" Gemma rushed toward us, her designer heels clicking against the polished floor, her face glowing with anticipation.

"Girl, I've been counting down the minutes since you called. Those outfits you all wore to the wedding recently were absolutely divine!" Ruby's voice carried that familiar spark of enthusiasm that made everything sound like an adventure, even in our dangerous world.

"Gemma, we're on a mission here. We need something that'll make our men lose their minds while striking fear into the hearts of our rivals," Nora announced with a wicked grin, sending us all into fits of laughter.

"Already ahead of you. I've pulled the most gorgeous pieces, complete with matching accessories that would make the Italian designers weep," Gemma practically bounced on her toes.

A sharp voice cut through our excitement from behind the mahogany counter. "You know, Gemma, it wouldn't kill you to let the rest of us serve some customers too."

"Not happening, Vanessa," Gemma's tone turned ice cold. This was the woman who'd been caught in bed with Gemma's ex-boyfriend, a low-level enforcer who'd been stupid enough to think he could play games with a made man's daughter.

"We specifically requested Gemma's assistance, and that's exactly what we're getting," Zoe's voice carried a warning that made Vanessa take a step back. In our world, disrespecting the wrong person could have deadly consequences.

We settled into the plush velvet seating area as Gemma wheeled over a rack bursting with incredible evening gowns and a cart loaded with shoe boxes from the finest European designers. She'd already sorted everything by our sizes and personal styles, accounting for the need to conceal weapons while maintaining elegance. The girl had an uncanny ability to balance beauty with the practical requirements of mafia wives.

We each grabbed our selections and disappeared into the private fitting rooms. But when we emerged, ready to show off our choices, we found very familiar male figures lounging in the chairs like they owned the place, which in some ways, they did.

The girls and I exchanged confused glances. What were they doing here? We were about to march over and demand answers when I noticed Vanessa practically draping herself over Dominic, while the other sales associates circled the guys like predators sensing weakness.

Gemma's eyes blazed with fury, but her position as an employee kept her hands tied. However, Zoe had no such restrictions. She strutted straight to Finn and settled onto his lap with theatrical grace, her hand instinctively checking that his shoulder holster was properly concealed.

"Well hello there, gorgeous. Did you come here just to surprise me?" Her voice dripped honey, and Finn's face lit up like Christmas morning, though his eyes remained alert, constantly scanning for potential threats.

Ruby, Nora, and I quickly followed suit, claiming our respective men who seemed more than pleased with the attention despite the underlying tension of being in public. The sales associates shot us looks of pure venom before retreating, and I had to resist the urge to remind them exactly who they were dealing with. But Vanessa wasn't giving up so easily, still pawing at Dominic with obvious desperation.

"Looks like you're the only available one here, handsome. Maybe we could grab a drink later and discuss some private business." Her voice had that whiny, desperate quality that made my skin crawl.

"What gave you the impression I was available?" Dominic stood up smoothly, his movement betraying the lethal training beneath his expensive suit. He crossed to Gemma and pulled her against him, his hand resting possessively on her waist. The kiss he gave her was slow, deliberate, and left no room for misinterpretation.

"Now why don't you go find someone else to bother before you end up regretting it," Zoe snarled at Vanessa, who stormed off with murder in her eyes. "And you men. Start talking. What's this little surprise visit about?"

"Looks like Dominic's considering opening a security consultation office here at the complex. He's been conducting surveillance assessments regularly recently," Gemma explained, though her smile suggested she didn't mind the constant protection.

"My beautiful goddess, that's actually not a terrible cover story. Then I could spend every moment ensuring your safety," Dominic's grin was absolutely shameless.

"You still haven't answered our question. Why are you here?" Nora pressed, clearly not buying their innocent act.

"Dominic mentioned this fantastic restaurant upstairs, so we figured we'd meet up and discuss some territorial arrangements," Caleb offered, though his explanation sounded rehearsed.

"Speak for yourself, brother. I came here for one reason, and that's to see my gorgeous redhead," Xavier tightened his arms around Ruby, his eyes doing a quick sweep of the boutique's exits.

"I keep telling you, I'm not your property, sweetheart," Ruby protested, but there was no real conviction behind it.

"Just admit you belong to me, Ginger. Put me out of this misery," Xavier's voice carried that pleading tone that never failed to amuse us, even as his hand rested near his concealed weapon.

"Doesn’t matter why we’re here now, ladies. Get up and model those incredible dresses my goddess selected for you," Dominic commanded with absolutely no shame whatsoever.

We spent the next extended period in a fashion show, trying on gown after gown with matching shoes and jewelry that could fund small countries. When we finished our selections, we deliberately kept our final choices secret. Gemma gathered everything and headed for the register, but Dominic pulled us aside before we could follow.

"Pick out some dresses and accessories for my goddess. I know you each chose several pieces, so select some for her as well. You know her taste better than anyone, and I trust your judgment completely," Dominic’s voice carried an urgency that was oddly endearing.

"You’re in luck. She already set aside her favorites earlier. I’ll grab them for you," Zoe told him before disappearing to retrieve the hidden selections.

At the register, we discovered the boutique owner deep in animated conversation with our men. She was a sophisticated woman who clearly understood the delicate nature of her clientele and approved of what she was seeing. To our shock, they’d already paid for every single item and stood holding multiple designer shopping bags.

We protested loudly, but they shut down our objections immediately. Dominic handed Gemma’s dresses to the boutique owner, who gave him a knowing wink before wrapping them in elegant tissue paper. The other sales associates watched with barely concealed jealousy burning in their eyes.

"Gemma, darling, you’ve made an absolutely wonderful sale today. Why don’t you take the rest of your shift off? Go enjoy dinner with your boyfriend and these lovely friends of yours," the boutique owner said warmly, practically beaming at the young couple while subtly acknowledging the power dynamics at play.